

WYCOMBE HIT BACK AFTER EARLY SHOCK

WHEN both Wycombe Wanderers and Clapton scored in the first six minutes of Saturday's Rothmans Isthmian League encounter, the stage looked set for the long awaited goal feast that has been absent for too long at Loakes Park this season.

But a combination of the rain, a greasy pitch and poor finishing brought only one further goal — enough to give Wycombe three deserved points to keep them up with the leaders in third place.

Conditions weren't easy when the teams started and a half-time downpour made matters much worse. The players found it hard enough to keep their feet, let alone produce attractive football. In the circumstances they did well but it was an inevitable anti-climax after that exciting victory over Margate in the cup last week.

Wanderers made a surprise change at full back, bringing in Paul Griffiths for his first league match instead of Paul Birdseye. This was presumably a result of Birdseye's poor performance against Margate and Griffiths' promising showing in Wednesday's friendly with Stevenage. Griffiths is obviously short of experience, but his endeavour makes up for what he lacks and against such a seasoned campaigner as Vince Scarfe, he did well to come out on top.

There was quite a bit of interest in this visit of Clapton, for the Essex club have improved considerably this season after many years in the doldrums. For once, the result wasn't a cert "home" and there was the added interest of seeing how the pressure of another booking would react to the players. Clapton, who have already amassed 12 penalty points, will have two league points deducted the next time a player is cautioned, five if a player is sent off.

That didn't seem to affect them a great deal, however, though one or two of them must have been close to becoming the dreaded "13th" at times. Full back Roy Freeman dished out too many fouls while Scarfe's dissent also threatened a booking. Apart from these two, the remainder of the team looked similar to any other club in the division. And in the first two minutes, they looked a good deal better!

That was how long it took

By **STUART EARP** Wycombe Wanderers 2, Clapton 1

Clapton to take the lead. Scarfe was the man who made it, jinking past Gary Hand on the bottom wing and crossing into the six-yard box. Big John Bull was there above the defence and rammed in a header that struck John Maskell and bounced out. Bull promptly tucked away his second chance.

After the initial shock of conceding such an early goal, Wanderers got down to the task in hand and could have won themselves a penalty when Tommy Lee brought down Mick Holifield inside the area. Then in the sixth minute Steve Perrin won a corner. Tony Horseman's flag kick was cleared to him again and this time "Bodger" found Alan Phillips at the far post. Wycombe's skipper headed back across the goal and Holifield finished a fine move with a volley that gave Tony Wiseman little chance. Two minutes later Wiseman did well to hold a rising drive from Terry Reardon.

Clapton almost paid dearly for allowing Phillips to move up unmarked at set pieces when he got in a powerful header which Wiseman could only parry, but Perrin — on the ground — lofted the ball over the top.

Wycombe's pressure was broken by one fine run by the balding Stan Spicer who took the ball from inside his own half but drove too high having run into the Wycombe box without challenge. This lack of commitment almost cost Wycombe the match last week when Norman Fusco hit the bar with only five minutes left.

Most of the action though, was centred around the Clapton net and goalkeeper Wiseman pulled off the save of the match with 24 minutes gone. From another corner, Scarfe flashed in a near post header that Wiseman somehow managed to tip over whilst in mid air. It was from this type of dead ball situation that Wanderers threatened most. When going forward, erratic distribution often spoilt their moves. Terry Reardon being the chief offender. Reardon sometimes produces the sort of pass that will completely split a defence but his attempts to produce something out of the ordinary occasionally gives the opposition the ball in a dangerous situation.

Another player who looked below his best in the first half was Tony Horseman. Lacking the pace to take on defenders,

he tended to slow the game down too often. But one of the main attributes of this player is his uncanny flicks and nudges that so often create goals. It was Bodger who made the second Wycombe score in the 33rd minute. He touched on a long ball from midfield and Perrin won the race with Wiseman to clip the ball home.

That goal put Wanderers in front at half time and the fact they didn't add to their lead was due to several factors. The rain certainly didn't help while Clapton persisted in playing virtually a back five, and left only two players to forage up front. There were also several missed chances by the Wycombe front runners and not for the first time this season, all their work could have been wasted had Clapton hit back late in the game.

The Essex side began the new half well with Scarfe winning two dangerous free kicks just outside the home box. Maskell, however, relieved the situation by sensibly deciding to punch rather than hold the ball. Once or twice Wycombe found themselves exposed at the back, tending to move into the centre and leaving the flanks unattended. Spicer for instance,

was unmarked in the 59th minute but sent his shot narrowly wide.

A fine run by Horseman (showing plenty of speed on this occasion) created a 61st minute chance for Keith Searle but the covering of Ron Murray saved Clapton at the expense of a corner.

A spell of Clapton pressure, including three successive corners came to nothing before Holifield burst onto the scene with 76 minutes gone. Another beautifully placed ball from Horseman gave Mick the chance to out-pace John Ford but his narrow angled shot went wide-as Wiseman advanced.

Again Clapton came back, ticking over well in midfield thanks to the impressive John Toney, but they found Phillips and Keith Mead in fine form at the heart of Wanderers' defence, Phillips playing one of his best games so far.

The better chances were made by Wycombe and they turned down one more opportunity to sew up the points in the 89th minute. Clapton were caught pushing forward when Horseman once again curled the ball superbly through the defence to Perrin, who was just on side. Steve ran on, clear of any opposition but Wiseman made his final save by blocking the ball with his body.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Griffiths; K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Hand; H. Kennedy, I. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin. Sub. D. Alexander (not used).

CLAPTON: A. Wiseman; J. Ford, R. Murray, G. Dudley, R. Freeman, S. Spicer, J. Toney, D. Clark, T. Lee; J. Bull, V. Scarfe. Sub. R. Pamplin (not used).

Referee: A. Barnes (London).

Half time: 2-1. Goalscorers Wycombe — Holifield (6), Perrin (33) Clapton — Bull (2).

Official paying attendance: 1,142 Approximate attendance: 1,480.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE										
Division One										Pts
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts			
Enfield	17	14	1	2	34	12	43	7		
Ilford	19	12	2	5	46	27	38	2		
Wycombe	17	10	5	2	27	13	35	1		
L'head	15	10	2	3	35	15	32	3		
Dulwich	18	9	3	6	29	22	30	3		
Sutton	16	9	1	6	29	19	28	1		
Bishop's	18	9	1	8	27	25	28	0		
Dagenham	10	8	1	1	25	8	26	0		
Tooting	11	8	0	3	17	11	24	3		
Barking	18	7	3	8	32	29	24	1		
Clapton	17	8	0	9	26	31	24	12		
W'slow	16	6	4	6	26	24	22	6		
Hendon	19	6	4	9	23	31	22	2		
Kingston	17	7	1	9	17	27	22	1		
Slough	17	5	4	8	21	26	19	2		
Woking	18	4	5	9	22	28	17	3		
Haves	18	4	5	9	24	34	17	10		
Oxford	16	5	2	9	20	29	17	3		
Hitchin	12	3	2	7	18	24	11	2		
L'stone	13	3	2	8	11	19	11	4		
Bromley	18	3	1	14	12	35	10	2		
Walton	18	3	1	14	15	47	10	4		